1509/2681.

A

SERMON

Preached

FOR

Reformation of Manners,

AT

Portſmouth,

November the 24*th*, 1699.

By William Ward, *Vicar of* Portſmouth, *and Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Earl of* Tankervile.

LONDON:

Printed for *A. B.* in the Year 1700.

To the Right Worſhipful

John Blakley, *Eſquire*,

Mayor of Portſmouth:

AND

The Juſtices of Peace, &c. belonging to that Corporation.

Gentlemen,

HIS *Majeſty, in his Late Gracious Speech to his Parliament, recommended to their Care the Repairs of the Ships, and of the Fortifications; of which Honourable Society (tho none of you at this time is a Member, and ſo cannot ſerve your Country in that Station) yet in this place where his Majeſty has the moſt important Fortification in the Three Kingdoms, for the Security of his Royal Fleet, you ſo exerciſe your Authority for ſuppreſſing and diſcouraging all ſorts of Immorality and Prophaneneſs, that the Foundation of our Future Defence and Preſervation, is already laid.*

laid at Portſmouth: *'Tis moſt certain that the Debauchery and Irreligion which ſo lately reigned within our Walls, was more formidable to deſtroy our* Town *and* Navy *than our Bullwarks to defend them;-But You by Your Zeal and Prudence, are ſetting bounds to the Inſults of* Vice *and* Impiety, *and the Prophane* Rabſhekah *muſt blaſpheme without the Walls, elſe You make him know,* That the Magiſtrate is the Miniſter of God, an Avenger to Execute Wrath on him that doth Evil.

That I, Your Unworthy Vicar, as far as my Miniſterial Concerns will permit me, may join with You in that great and good Work You have undertaken for Reformation of Manners, *here I humbly Dedicate a Sermon for that purpoſe, at Your Requeſt, which is the ſame thing with me as a Command, I print it. I know with whom I have to do, with Men of Candor and Charity, as well as of Zeal and Courage; and therefore I preſume you will pardon the Faults you find in it; Which will infinitely oblige,*

Gentlemen,

Your Affectionate Friend,

and Humble Servant,

WILLIAM WARD.

SERMON

Preached at

Portſmouth,

On *Friday* the 24*th* of *November*, 1699.

St. James. V. 19, 20.

Brethren, if any of you do Err from the truth, and one convert him,

Let him know that he which converteth the Sinner from the Errour of his ways, ſhall ſave a Soul from Death, and ſhall hide a Multitude of Sins.

THE Apoſtle, in the words of the Text, writeth to all the *Jewiſh* Converts, whereſoever diſperſed, and in them to all other Chriſtians, to excite them to that Great and Indiſpenſible Duty in Chriſtianity, of Reproving, Exhorting, and Converting one another from the Errour of his ways.

In profecuting the Argument I have in hand, to ſtir up and excite all Chriſtians in their ſeveral Capacities and Stations, to promote each others Spiritual wellfare, I ſhall ſhew:

Firſt, The Neceſſity of uſing our Joint Endeavours for the ſuppreſſing of Vice and Irreligion, or any thing that may be deſtructive to Chriſts Kingdom.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew what Methods are moſt Proper, Rational, and ſerve to be purſued for that end.

Thirdly, I ſhall ſhew what benefits are moſt likely and certain to accrue to the Church and Nation, by the Conſcientious and Prudent diſcharge of this Duty by each Man in his Proper Station.

Firſt, The Neceſſity of uſing our Joint Endeavours for the Suppreſſing Vice and Irreligion, or any thing that may be deſtructive to Chriſts Kingdom.

And here I ſhall ſhew our Obligations thereto.

Firſt, From the Conſideration of our Baptiſmal Covenant.

Secondly, On the accouut of that force and oppoſition Religion and Virtue meet with from the Aſſentors, and Maintainers of Vice and Prophaneneſs.

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew our Obligations to combine together for the ſuppreſſing of Vice and Prophaneneſs

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from the Conſideration of our Baptiſmal Covenant: Tho individually conſidered, the Members of Chriſt are many, yet in a Myſtical Senſe being many, we are but one Body in Chriſt, and every one Members one of another, which ſignifies to us, that by Virtue of our Baptiſmal Covenant, we are linked all in one and the ſame Intereſt to promote, as far in us, lyes the Holineſs and Spirituality of Chriſts Kingdom: That as all the Members of the Natural Body exert their Powers, Activity, and Vigour to reſiſt and ſubdue ſome Dangerous, inſidious, and Irreconcileable Enemy; ſo Chriſtians being Members one of another in the Myſtical Body, the Church, are obliged by a Solemn Oath and Covenant by Mutual Councells, Aids, and Combination, to beat down the ſtrong holds of *Satan*, to ſet Foot to Foot, and keep their order, and never to look back till they have deſtroyed and defeated the Profeſſed Enemy of Virtue and Piety. Rom. 12, 5.

So we find the Apoſtle *Paul* equipping out his Army of Chriſtians; *Put on the whole Armour of God that ye may be able to ſtand againſt the Wiles of the Devil, for we wreſtle not* (ſaith he) *againſt Fleſh and Blood: But againſt Principalities, againſt Powers, againſt Spiritual Wickedneſſes in high Places*; Therefore they had need of the Breaſt-Plate of Righteouſneſs, and the Shield of Faith, and the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, and Prayer; and not only theſe Formidable Weapons are recommended, but that they ſtand, having their loyns girt about with truth, *i. e.* is confederate, and joyn their forces in ſo Righteous a Cauſe, that they may be able to quench all the Fiery Darts of the Wicked; Hence Epheſ. 6.

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it was very probable that that Heroick Ceremony took its rise in the Earlier Times of our Religion, when the Catechumens, upon their initiation into the Church of Christ, by Baptism, stood with their Faces towards the *West*, (which being directly opposite to the *East*, the place of light, did Symbolically represent the Prince of Darkness) whom they were to declare War against by stretching out their hands in defiance of him.

Dr. *Caves* Primitive Christianity, Part 1. Cap. 10.

Men that have enter'd into Covenant with Christ by Baptism, are frequently call'd by the Apostle, and by the *Greek* Fathers φωτιζόμενοι, or the Enlightned, because that they profess that they are Children of Light, and of the day, which signifies, that what ever difficulties they Encounter, they should have their Baptism in their Eye, and look upon themselves as indispensably obliged to resist, and confound the Works of Darkness, to suppress their Growth, and destroy the first Buddings.

Nothing else but the Consideration of this one thing, imbolden'd and invigorated the first Christians with an irresistable Spirit, to confront and baffle the Reigning Impietys of their times; They were Engaged by the most Sacred Tye, their Baptism, and therefore neither the high Looks of the Proud, nor the Scoffs of the Atheists, nor the Cruelty of their Persecutors, nor the Insolence of the Rabble could stem their Resolute Endeavours to reform the World.

Eccles. 5. 4,5. *When thou makest a vow unto God defer not to keep it; better it is thou shouldst not vow, than thou shouldst vow, and not pay*; and if thou vowest thy self in Baptism to be a Servant and Subject of Christs

Christs Kingdom, and to joyn with thy Brethren and Fellow Subjects to promote it's honour; according to the Tenour of the Scripture, if thou dost not Really and Effectually keep thy part of the Covenant, it is better thou hadst never vowed; *i.e.* never been a Christian; If therefore we Patiently and Tacitly consent to that overspreading Wickedness (more destructive than the Pestilence which rageth at noon day) by hearing Gods Sacred Name Prophaned, his Oracles ridicul'd, and the like, we are forgetful of our vow, we become unworthy of our Holy Profession, and we contribute as much to their Wickedness, by holding our Tongues, as *Saul* contributed to the murther of St. *Stephen* by holding their Cloaths whilst they Stoned him. Acts 22. 20.

If it be our sin, if we forbear to reprove such, how much more their sin that commit it? What a horrible thing is it to hear a Christian, and in a Christian Country too, and that openly, and to the regrate of all Good Men, to Prophane the Name and Religion into which he was baptized! Go but into *Turkey*, and find out, if you can, that Audacious Infidel that dares so much as speak one Contemptible word against his Prophet *Mahomet*: And if he has so great a Veneration for his Prophet, and that a false one too, how Hainous is it for Christians to Prophane that Name into which they were baptized, and to act in open Rebellion and Hostility against that God that made them, and his Son Jesus Christ, that is sure to Judg them, and so to save, or to damn them for ever.

Conſidering the Atheiſm, Immorality and Prophaneneſs of this preſent age, we are as much engaged by our Baptiſmal Vow to defend the Divinity, Goſpel, and Honour of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, againſt the Inſults of Atheiſtical and Ungodly Wretches, as the Primitive Chriſtians were by Virtue of the ſame Obligation, to oppoſe the Infidel *Jews*, and the Heathen World, and indeed much more, in that the Scandal is not given by *Jews* and Heathens, his profeſſed Enemies, but by Domeſticks, and ſuch as were liſted under his Banner. Thoſe that have any Cordial and Sincere Love for the Lord Jeſus, muſt certainly maintain his Honour and defend his cauſe againſt his more Dangerous Enemies of his own Houſhold.

Second Obligation for our Joint Endeavours to ſuppreſs Vice and Prophaneneſs, is from the conſideration of that Oppoſition Virtue and Piety meet with from the bold Oppoſer of them.

Conſidering the preſent State of the World, wherein can a Chriſtian ſhew more bravery and do more Honour to God, his Country, his Neighbour, and himſelf, then by aſſuming that Courage which is Neceſſary and requiſite to ſtem that Torrent of Wickedneſs which has met with no Oppoſition for ſo long a time? What then have we to do, but to take ſuch Juſt, Innocent, and withall ſuch Prudent Methods as may depreſs that Common Prophaneneſs, which only gets credit by our Silence; What! ſhall not we have the courage to do as much for God and Religion, as leud and Profligate Wretches dare to do againſt them?

Si dura fronte ſunt, durato & tu é contra tuam; nil tam durum quod duriori non cedat; Tho Impudence for a time, ſteel Wicked Men with a Spirit of Oppoſition, yet like painted beauty on the Face, it dyes, and melts away, when a Courage enflamed with Divine Sparks from Heaven Darts upon it; Thus if we but take to us a Reſolution and Courage to repel thoſe ſeemingly brave, in the worſt of cauſes; their beſt and ſtrongeſt efforts will be but as the Morning Cloud, and as the early dew that goeth away. St. Barnard de conſider. ad Eugen. L. 4to. *Hoſea* 6.4.

The Hiſtorian gives a very Solid Reaſon why *Alexander* the great conquer'd *Aſia* in ſo few Years, *Quia primus auſus eſt Vana Contemnere.* He was politick as well as brave, and by enquiring into the Weakneſs of the *Perſian* Monarchy, ſaw as well as fought his way to an eaſy conqueſt; ſo if we, with the ſame Circumſpection, enquire into the Strength, and efforts of the Devils Empire, we ſhall find more of ſhew and Pageantry than of Real Oppoſition.

Shall not then the Teſtimony of a Good Conſcience, the Aſſiſtances of Heaven, and the Honour of God, (far Nobler motives than Wicked Men can pretend to for any thing they do) and conducive of all the good both of this World and the next, ſtir us up to reſiſt thoſe Vices, not only a diſgrace to our Heavenly Profeſſion, but likewiſe our Human Nature?

What a Horrid thing it is to ſee Men commit their Enumerous Crimes in the very face of thoſe Laws that are made to reſtrain them, and Correct them, as it were on purpoſe to brow-beat all ſort of Piety and goodneſs, and to hiſs them off the Stage of

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the World: Who in the Words of the Pſalmiſt 12. A. have ſaid, *With our Tongues will we prevail, our Lips are our own, who is Lord over us?* If our Courage fail us now in ſo Critical a Moment, when Sin and Wicked Men are ſo Rampant, as to ſtrive for the Maſtry; How muſt it needs fail us when we ſhall appear before the Tribunal of that God, whoſe Holineſs we ſuffer to be thus diſhonoured, and whoſe Righteous Cauſe we let fall, and Periſh meerly through Cowardize, for want of a Chriſtian Magnaminity and Zeal? *But whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me and my words*, ſaith our Saviour, *in this Adulterous, and Sinful Generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed when he cometh in the Glory of his Father with his Holy Angels.* Mark 8. 38.

'Tis known full well, and that to the juſt praiſe, and Glory of this Nation, That no Proteſtant State, or Country, has with greater Prudence, Zeal and Learning, withſtood and diſappointed the Aſſaults of Popery, ever ſince the beginning of the Reformation, than it has done; and why not the ſame Zeal, Contrivance, and Study to ſuppreſs the Dangerous attempts of Vice and Wicked Men? Is not the Devil as Formidable an Enemy as the Pope? Is not Irreligion and Atheiſm as Deſtructive as Superſtition? Is not a Prophane Debauchee as great an Enemy to his Country as a Jeſuit? And now, was a Plot levelled againſt the State, and a Jeſuit at the bottom of it, every Man that has a Love for his Country would think himſelf obliged to diſcover it, and the parties concerned in it.

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And now why not the ſame Zeal and concern to ſuppreſs Irreligion and Prophaneneſs, and to detect the leud Aſſertors of it? Thoſe of themſelves (if not timely ſuppreſſed) without the help of either Pope or Jeſuit will deſtroy us, and are bringing down thoſe National Judgments which a haſty and ſpeedy Reformation can only prevent.

Secondly, Since it is a Duty ſo Neceſſary to ſtand up in the defence of Piety and Virtue; 'Tis Neceſſary, yea very neceſſary, that this Grand Affair be managed with ſuch Caution and Simplicity that no Objections may juſtly be levelled neither againſt the Managers nor the thing it ſelf; That your Moderation as well as Zeal may be known unto all Men; That we diſtinguiſh between Single Acts, and a Habit of Sin, and ſo treat the Offenders accordingly; That we have Compaſſion on ſome, making a difference; If I know a Man to be a Common Drunkard, Prophane Swearer and the like, that laughs at reproof, and is ſteel'd in his Wickedneſs, this Man is the Object of Severity and Juſtice, and to have pitty for ſuch a Wretch, is to deſtroy his Soul, unleſs it be to pitty his folly: But if a Man deſigns not to affront God nor Scandalize Religion, and yet through Paſſion or Inadvertancy does or ſaith that (which if proſecuted, would bring him under the laſh of the Law) I think to proceed againſt him is unkind, yea unchriſtian, if the Opinion of the Apoſtle fail me not; *If a Man be overtaken in a fault, reſtore ſuch a one in the Spirit of Meekneſs, conſidering thy ſelf, leaſt thou alſo be tempted.* Gal. 6. 1.

First, Then, the Reformer ought to be a Man of Temper and Moderation; Our Zeal muſt not eat up our Charity. To puniſh and vex his Neighbour is not the deſign of the Reformer; neither does God, or Religion require it, but where Sinners are become Obdurate and Incorrigible.

Take therefore for this purpoſe ſuch excellent Examples as Holy Scripture furniſh us with.

First, Of God himſelf in his Puniſhment of *Sodom*, who goes wiſely and ſlowly to Work; He ſpeaks after the Manner of Men, as if he would inform himſelf throughly, if their Wickedneſs was as great as the Report of it; Becauſe their Sin is very Grievous, *I will go down now and ſee whether they have done altogether according to the Cry of it*; as if he had ſaid, after the Manner of Men; I will be Wary and Cautious in my dealings with *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*; Tho' I hear ſuch Vile and Abominable things of them, yet all is not true that is reported; Perhaps ſome may have taken a Prejudice againſt theſe Cities, and repreſented the Caſe far worſe then it is, and therefore for my better information, I will go down and ſee if all be true that I hear.

Thus from the Divine Benignity ſpeaking after the Manner of Men, thoſe that are in Authority are taught Caution and Circumſpection, not to Judge raſhly, nor to take every haſty Information, but to enquire into the matter, and be throughly informed that the evidence be good and clear before they proceed to execute the Laws: And from Gods dealing with theſe Cities we may learn, both People and

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Magiſtrates, how to deal with Offenders: God admits *Abraham* to be their Advocate, who ſo got ground on the Almighty, that had there but been found Ten Righteous Perſons in *Sodom*, it, and the Cities of the Plains had ne'er been turn'd into Flames, and Sulphur: If it be poſſible by fair means to Reclaim an Offender, we ought never to proceed to Rigour; But when Juſtice is tyred out, and Chriſtian and Neighbourly Admonitions cannot have their wiſhed for Effects, then 'tis highly Neceſſary that Juſtice ſhould take place, that others may learn and fear, and do no more ſo wickedly.

In the Second Place, the Nature and Deſign of the Goſpel leads us t[illegible] that we endeavour, firſt to try Methods of Benignity and Mildneſs; Thus we find St. *James* Reprehending the Swearers; He does not uſe Comminations, nor threatning, but that ſoft Compellation, *My Brethren*: *But above all things, my Brethren ſwear not, neither by Heaven, neither by the Earth, neither by any other Oath, but let your yea be yea, and nay nay, leaſt ye fall into Condemnation*; And again, the Apoſtle dehorting the *Corinthians* from uncleaneſs of Mind and Body, uſeth that endearing expreſſion, *Dearly beloved, let us cleanſe our ſelves from all Filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit, and perfecting holineſs in the Fear of God*,

Jam. 5. 12.

2 Cor. 7. 1.

And now to ſhew you how Effectual ſuch Methods may prove for the Reclaiming of a Debauched and Profligate Mind, I ſhall entertain you with that well known ſtory in *Euſebius*, with ſome Reflections on it to our purpoſe.

He

Euſeb. Eccleſ. Hiſtor. *Li.* 3. *Cap.* 17.

He tells us that St. *John* the Apoſtle in his Viſitation of the Churches, near about *Epheſus*, chanced to fix his Eye upon a certain Youth, whoſe rare Complexion and Dexterity of parts, were Probable Indications, that for time to come he might prove an Excellent and Uſeful Perſon; upon which he Recommended him to the Care of the Biſhop of the place, who ſpared no pains for his Improvement; But it proves his Misfortune (as it often happens to other Young Men) to fall into bad Company, no better than Thieves and cut Throats, of which Troop they made him Captain; Some time after St. *John* returns that way, and demands the Youngſter at the hands of the Biſhop, who in Tears, tells him all that had happen'd: Upon which the Aged Apoſtle goes in queſt of him, and finds him amongſt his leud Comrades, with whom he committed his Roberys: But no ſooner did he fix his Eye upon the Grave Apoſtle, but his heart fails him, and in a Cowardly and Dejected manner makes the beſt of his way from the Good Old Man, who overtakes him, and ſo effectually convinced him of his folly, that in the words of the Hiſtorian, he was Rebaptized in his own Tears, and never returned to the Commiſſion of his former Extravagancies, but was for ever after as ſignal for his Reformation as he had been for his former Tranſgreſſion: In which Relation,

Firſt, We gather, that kind and Gentle Methods have proved Effectual for the Reformation of a Debauched and Profligate Youth; Where there is Ingenuity and Good Nature it ought to be worked upon,

upon, and managed by the milder Courſes, as the Youngſter is by the Aged Apoſtle in the ſtory.

Secondly, We learn how eaſily a Leud Perſon is won over to the ſide of Virtue, when he is verily perſwaded that thoſe that Endeavour to Reclaim him, do it purely out of Love to his Soul, and a Principle of Conſcience; The Young Man muſt needs know that the Apoſtle could have no other deſign than the ſaving him from the pit of Hell, when he hazarded his Life amongſt a den of Thieves and Cut-Throats.

Thirdly, We learn, that great and generous minds that are won over to the ſide of virtue, by the dint and force of Rational Methods and Arguments, ſtand more ſtanch in its defence, after their Converſion, than ſuch who are awed by Severity, and Laſhed into Duty; Having once approved it to their Reaſon and Underſtanding, they think it the beſt Object of their choice, and love it and delight in it.

I know very well that the Leudneſs and Impiety of this Age, particularly of this place, calls not only for *Solomons* Rod but *Rehoboams* Scorpion; Yet 'tis beſt to begin by mild and gentle methods: Not only that Offenders may have no excuſe, if convicted, after often and Repeated Admonitions, but by Reaſon of the Temper of our People, who in ſome Reſpects are like the *Romans*, when *Numa* came firſt to the Government, Obdurate, and render'd hard as Iron by the late War, and therefore our Magiſtrates would do well, in Imitation of that Famous Legiſlator, to

Plutarchs life of Numa.

work upon the Humor of the Town, by the kind Applications of Humanity as well as Juſtice.

It behoves us cheifly in all our Endeavours and Methods to Reclaim our Erring Brethren, to be exceeding tender of Reputation, elſe it looks like Malice, and a deſign to Lord it over them, and to juſtifie our our ſelves, by a Specious pretence of reclaiming their Miſcarriages; In this caſe I ſhall direct you to the Magiſtrate, as our Saviour do's to the Authority of the Church: *If thy Brother offend, go and tell him his fault betwixt thee and him alone*; If he ſhall hear thee, then thou haſt gained thy Brother: And then I pray what need is there of expoſing his fault, and Informing the Magiſtrate? But if he will not hear thee, that his Credit and Reputation may not be publickly blazon'd, get two or three ſober and well deſigning Neighbours to joyn with thee in adviſing and reproving him: But if he ſhall afterwards perſiſt in his Wickedneſs, and in contempt, not only of thy Brotherly kindneſs to him, but likewiſe in oppoſition to the Laws both of God and Man, then ſpare him not, but inform againſt him, Let the Law take its courſe and let him be puniſhed here, that his Soul may be Saved in the day of the Lord.

The Methods of kindneſs are not to be abuſed always, and when after ſeveral tenders of them they prove ineffectual, we may then conclude that Perſons ſo reproved, are given up to a Reprobate Mind, and there is room made for Legal Penalties and Inflictions; And indeed tho there be Severity uſed to ſuch Profligates as Mercy and Forbearance cannot Reclaim, yet at the ſame time there is tender-

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neſs and pitty ſhewed to Poſterity; many who are now Children, ſeeing the Examplary Puniſhment of Prophane and Incorrigible Wretches, may be deterred from the Commiſſion of thoſe ſins for which they ſee them ſuffer, and ſhew a good Example to their Poſterity, and ſo ſin as well as Puniſhment, in proceſs of time, will be out of date, and duty become Natural and eaſy.

None I hope will conclude me an Advocate for Obſtinate and Incorrigible Sinners, becauſe I have ſpoke ſo much for Caution and Moderation (which ſhould ſuffer the more if theſe Methods cannot work upon them) But in my Conſcience and Judgment, theſe are the beſt Courſes we can take in our firſt Eſſays to a Reformation; hereby we ſhall preſerve that Neighbourly Love and Concord, which otherwiſe would Sour us into hatred, and eſtrange a Neighbour to his Friend, if Violent and haſty Courſes find Encouragement before theſe Milder.

In the laſt place, it behoves the Reformer to be a man of Exemplary Piety and Virtue to others; and he muſt act out of a Principle of Sincerity, and a pure Conſcience, that the party offending may be really perſwaded, that his intentions proceed from a good will, and a hearty deſire of his Converſion; The deſign of ſuch a one is not nicely to pry into the Miſcarriages of his Neighbour, and ſo diſturb him by needleſs and unprofitable Informations to the Magiſtrate, but to conſult his Peace and Quiet, and Credit, in all that he can: He is that perfect man of which the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *Throughly furniſhed unto all Good Works*, that he may convince the World 2 Tim. 3. 17.

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of the Sincerity and goodneſs of his deſigns.

There are Sins which by Reaſon of the Secrecy and cunning of their Actors, may not eaſily be detected, nor come under the laſh of Human Laws; And therefore if the Reformer live in the Commiſſion of ſuch Sins as come only under Gods Cognizance, and yet be ready on all occaſions to expoſe thoſe (who are only more guilty by the Laws of Men) he falls from his Character; *Non eſt Corrector ſed Prodi-*
2 Tim. 3. 5. *tor*; He is not a Friend but a Betrayer, and in the words of the Apoſtle to *Timothy*, *Having a form of Godlineſs, but denying the Power thereof; from ſuch turn away*, and let him not pretend to reform others who wants ſo great a Reformation in himſelf: How Hypocritical is it for an Invidious Lyar to inform againſt a Prophane Swearer; A private Cheat againſt a Publick Gamſter; A reſerved Drunkard againſt an Open Blaſphemer; A Sly Adulterer againſt Rioting and Drunkeneſs; A Sacrilegious Perſon againſt Sabbath breaking?

If there be ſuch pretended Reformers, God is certain one time or other to diſcover their Nakedneſs, it being inconſiſtent with his Wiſdom and Honour, that ſo Glorious a Cauſe as that of Religion, ſhould be carried on by ſuch Vile and Hypocritical Inſtruments of Iniquity.

Thirdly, I ſhall ſhew what benefits may accrue to the Church and Nation, our Neighbour and our ſelves, by a Wiſe and Prudent Management of this great undertaking for Reformation.

Firſt,

First. If things be managed conſcienciouſly and wiſely, I know no means more effectual to unite us all in one Communion; The old objection againſt the Church of *England*, too much a Friend, too nearly Related to *Rome*, that any Zealous and Conſcientious Proteſtant ſhould hold Communion with her, has now loſt its ſting and venome: Witneſs the brave Efforts made in the late Reign by the Divines of the Church of *England*, againſt the Antichriſtian Intereſt; Theſe were the bold Aſſertors of the Proteſtant cauſe, and that came in to the help of the Lord againſt the mighty, when there were thoughts of heart for the diviſions of *Reuben*; Witneſs that *Nubes Teſtium* of Men now living, and of books that will never dye, but are the Eternal Monuments of their Piety and Learning, as well as of their Zeal and Courage in the day of battle.

What now can enter into the heart of Man to object? Why, Perhaps Churchmen are not ſo Zealous for Religion in their Endeavours for ſuppreſſing Vice and Prophaneſs as ſome others; But now if we be as active as others in the work of Reformation, as indeed we ought (not only in the account of our Baptiſmal Covenant, but as we are the only Church by Law Eſtabliſhed) and therefore may preſume to greater Authority on this Work then others can; If thus I ſay we behave our ſelves, then the Edge of this Objection is taken of: And my Charity leads me to hope, that the deſign of thoſe well diſpos'd Diſſenters who joyn with Churchmen in this good work, is

to remove this and all other Objections, that we may all ſtand faſt with one Spirit and one Mind, ſtriving together for the faith of the Goſpel.

Secondly, This Work, if well managed, will entitle us to the bleſſing and Favour of Almighty God, and ſo 'twill hide and cover the Multitude of our National Sins: *They that honour me*, I *will honour*, are his own words: And ſhould we Sacrifice whole Hecatombs of Fat Oxen and Sheep; Nay, the Fruit of our Body, our firſt born, 'twould not be ſo acceptable a Sacrifice as that of ſuppreſſing all ſort of Immorality and Prophaneſs, which only can diſhonour God, and which only can incenſe him againſt us: Let us but clear our Towns and Cities of all ſorts of Leudneſs and Debauchery, and then we need not fear any leading into Captivity, nor Complaining in our Streets; This is what his Gracious Majeſty in his Proclamation, particularly in his late Speech to his Parliament, has Recommended to their care; and may God proſper all their Pious Endeavours to that end, that the Peace we now enjoy may be built on a laſting Foundation, and that we being deliver'd from the hands of our Enemies, may ſerve God without Fear, in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs before him all the days of our Life.

1 Sam. 2. 30.

Thirdly, 'Tis an act of the greateſt Charity to the Souls of Men to Endeavour their Reformation; *He that converteth his Brother from the Errour of his Ways ſhall ſave a Soul from Death*: *A good Man* (ſaith

(ſaith *Solomon*) *is Merciful to his Beaſt*; and he is worſe than a Beaſt who is not Merciful to his Brother, (eſpecially in the concerns of his Soul) What an Heroick act is that thou haſt done when thy Brother, next to the Blood, and Sufferings of his Saviour, ſhall impute his Salvation to thy Charitable Endeavours for his Reformation? Tho the Righteous ſmite him now, it will then be a kindneſs, and tho' he now reprove him, it ſhall be an excellent Oyl which ſhall not break his head; It matters not what means were taken for his Converſion, he is ſure to be for ever thankful: And if ſo be that the Church Triumphant put up Prayers in Heaven for their Friends on Earth, thou art ſure of a Friend who will intermix his *Halelujahs* with earneſt aud hearty Prayers, that thou mayeſt partake of that bliſs which he enjoyeth with ſo much Delight and Complacency: But if there be no ſuch thing, we have a ſure word of Promiſe. *That they that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteouſneſs as the Stars for ever and ever*, Dan. 12. 3.

Since then this is ſo Glorious, ſo Beneficial a Work both for the Temporal and Spiritual Intereſts of Men: That if wiſely and ſpeedily applyed, we may cover a Multitude of National Sins, and ſave our Neighbours, our ſelves and Poſterity too from Deſtruction; Let every Man with *Aaron* take his Cenſer in his hand, to make attonement for this Sinful Nation, and divert the Execution of that wrath, which is gone out from the Lord on pur-

purpoſe to deſtroy us if we perſiſt in our ſins. And let us make ſure that our Aſſociating for this purpoſe, have no other aim nor deſign than the Glory of God, and the Good and Benefit of our Neighbours; If this Councel, or this Work, be of Men, it will come to naught, or if it be only the Effect of Spiritual Pride or Hypocriſy; If it be the Councel and Work of buſy Bodies and Factious Spirits, time will ſhew it in its Proper Colours: But if it be of God, *i. e.* out of a ſincere deſign to promote Piety towards him and Charity towards Men, then it is likely to thrive and proſper; And tho' it may ſeem Ridiculous, and be the Subject of ſome Men's Scoffs, as *David* was to *Michal*, when he Danced before the Ark, yet the ſame Anſwer will ſerve for them as did for her; *It is before the Lord, and therefore we will be more Vile than thus*, 2 Sam. 6. 22.

To conclude; That this great Work may have its deſired Effects, and Proſper above all things, we muſt ſeek to God for his Diviue Aid and Aſſiſtance; In Imitation of St. *Paul* who (tho a choſen Veſſel to bear Gods Name before the Gentiles) and a Man of great Learning, Parts and Natural Courage, yet he was ſo far from preſuming on his own Abilitys, That he deſired the Prayers of the *Epheſians*, *Eph.* 6. 19, 20. *Pray for me that utterance may be given me, that I may open my Mouth boldly to make known the Miſteries of the Goſpel.*

That

Thus in Imitation of that great Apoſtle, we muſt have an Eye to the Prayers of the Church. That it would pleaſe God to bleſs and keep the Magiſtrates, giving them Grace to execute Juſtice aud maintain truth, and to gjve us all an heart to love and dread him, and to bring into the way of truth all ſuch as have erred and are deceived; Then in the Mercies of the moſt High, we ſhall not miſcarry in this Holy and Generous Deſign for the Reformation, and ſhall ſoon ſtem the Encroaching Tide of Immorality and Prophaneneſs; In a ſhort time the World will become much better, and Wicked Men, being aſhamed of their Vices, ſhall caſt their darling Idols to the Moles and to the Batts.

Nothing more certain then that Men who are reſolved to perſiſt in their Evil Courſes, will never Favour nor ſpeak well of this Pious undertaking: Neither indeed can this be expected, for what Concord hath Chriſt with *Belial*? But what then? Is it not a Righteous Cauſe, the Cauſe of God? Therefore fear not, nor be diſmayed, be ſtrong and of a Good Courage in this Juſt and Important Warfare, and give God the Glory of all your Conqueſts, and in the day when Chriſt comes in the Glory of his Father to Judge the World, peculiar Coronets are prepar'd for ſuch Eminent Saints that with Boldneſs and Courage aſſerted his Cauſe in an Adulterous and Sinful Generation; *For he that confeſſeth me before Men; him will I confeſs before my Father which is in*

Heaven, i. e. I will certainly receive and juſtifie that man in the preſence of my Father, Saints and Angels, who in a leud and perverſe age ſet himſelf againſt the Wickedneſs of it, and aſſerted my cauſe againſt my Enemies with Sincerity and Boldneſs; *But he that denies me before Men, of him, will the Son of Man be aſhamed when he comes in the Glory of his Father with the Holy Angels, i. e.* If any for fear, or Pleaſure, or Profit ſhall forſake me and my cauſe, him will I reject and Scorn in that day of trouble, when he will ſtand moſt in need of my Support and Aſſiſtance.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Might, Majeſty and Power aſcribed this day, henceforth and for ever more. Amen.

FINIS.